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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR

DEVELOPMENT, EFFECTS OF IRAQI INSTABILITY

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**¶1. Summary:** (C) During an October 15 meeting with Ambassador, Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Salem Al-Sabah spoke about Iranian unity regarding the development of their nuclear program but division regarding the country's public handling of the situation. He reported that the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator would soon be sacked. On Iraq, he added that Iran stood to benefit from the lack of Arab involvement and that an Arab League delegation would make an upcoming trip to Baghdad despite ongoing violence. End summary.

Iran: No Division Regarding Right to Pursue Nuclear Weapons

**¶2. (C)** According to Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Salem Al-Sabah, former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani criticized newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's handling of their nuclear development program. While there is no division among Iranians regarding their right to pursue nuclear weapons, the FM explained, they are torn over how to handle the situation. "Under (President Mohammed) Khatami, we didn't see this division; there was more unified public support," he stated. The "new guy," he stated, "is making grandiose statements" about Iran's program, agitating the international community. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed shared that "rumor has it Ahmadinejad will replace" his chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, after India voted at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to refer Iran to the UN Security Council. The negotiator, the FM reported, apparently had told Ahmadinejad that India was guaranteed to vote in Iran's favor at the IAEA.

Iraq: Iran Benefits from Instability, Moussa to Travel

**¶3. (C)** At the next Organization of Islamic Conferences summit in Mecca in late November, Iraq's neighbors may hold a side meeting to discuss Iraqi instability, the FM reported. "Iran stands to benefit from the lack of Arab involvement in Iraq," Shaykh Dr. Mohammed warned. An attack on a recent Arab League (AL) delegation to Baghdad resulted in the death of two Iraqi security forces. This ongoing violence, the FM added, is why AL Secretary General Amr Moussa would not release the exact date of his upcoming travel to Baghdad although the FM predicted Moussa's arrival on October 17. Regarding Iraq's constitutional referendum, Ambassador reminded the FM of the importance of public remarks from Iraq's friends and neighbors lauding positive steps Iraq has taken. The FM shared that the Council of Ministers would likely issue a statement October 16.

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LEBARON